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Statement submitted by Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary — Loreto Generalate, Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Inc. and Partnership for Global Justice, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Gender-based discrimination threatens to undermine the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in real and measurable ways. Girls and women are critically disadvantaged in the world, and it is clear that there can be no sustainable development without gender equality. Social protection systems and infrastructure worldwide ignores and subordinates women and girls through their systemic structures. Women and girls need to be integrated and represented so that they are accounted for and their specific needs are met. Addressing these rising inequalities is an indispensable requirement in order to uphold the inherent and inalienable dignity of all human beings. The United Nations and member states must step up to their commitments and efforts to eliminate these inequalities that are exacerbating the gender gap, leaving girls and women vulnerable to exclusion from social protection systems, public services and extreme poverty. There must be a shift towards integral human development, a model that works towards combating inequality across social, political, and economic policies.

Women are disadvantaged, over represented and disproportionately affected within the context of each across each of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals. Findings by the ILO World Social Protection Report show that:

- Only 35 per cent of children worldwide have access to social protection.
- Only 41 per cent of new mothers receive a maternity benefit.
- Women do 2.6 times the unpaid care and domestic work than men.
- The labour force participation rate among prime working-age women (aged 25–54) stands at 63 per cent of women compared to 94 per cent among their male counterparts.
- Up to 30 per cent of income inequality is due to inequality within households.
- The global gender pay gap is 23 per cent.
- 330 million women and girls live on less than USD1.90 a day, 4.4 million more than men.

In order to lift girls and women out of extreme poverty and work towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particular attention must be made to universal social protection and sustainable infrastructure so that no one is left behind. As the impacts of social protection programmes are not gender neutral, states must ensure that programmes address women's specific needs throughout the different phases of their lives, from childhood to old age. Programmes should factor in women's care role as well as the differences in access to services, infrastructure and productive work between men and women. Social protection programmes should take into account the double burden that unpaid care work and the responsibilities imposed by conditionalities place on women. They must be mindful of the heterogeneity of women's experiences and consider the intersectionality of gender, race and class, among other identity markers.

Implementing National Floors of Social Protection (ILO Recommendation 202) is an essential, action-oriented policy that ensures governments uphold their primary responsibility to provide basic social protection to their citizens. In order to be sustainable, these social protection services must be universal, and inclusive of women and girls, ensuring the fulfilment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural human rights. Access to health care, education and basic income security is essential in lifting this group up below the poverty line.

Women need to be included in political arenas so these specific needs are not overlooked and ignored when it comes to these social protection policies. Reforms to social protection systems can mitigate the disadvantage women and girls face in accessing social protection and help to expand coverage to those that are left out. We must prioritize these social protection policies for women and girls and pledge to implement them in order to ensure the dignity of all persons.

To achieve social inclusion, increased effectiveness of fiscal policies is pivotal. Within developing countries, an effective and reformed taxation system can ensure that fiscal policies are focused on implementing basic social services such as healthcare, education and wage benefits in order to cater to those most disadvantaged.

Research shows that Social Protection Floors for all are financially and fiscally possible in most countries. What is required for their successful implementation is the political will of developing countries to allocate resources within the budget. As outlined in the 2018 Financing the End of Extreme Poverty report, developed countries receive ten times more aid per person than those in less developed countries. Donor states need to commit to redistributing their aid and funding, targeting it to those countries that need it most so that girls are women are empowered and protected, not left behind.

To ensure all member states have the resources to implement International Labour Organization Recommendation 202, reform of the current financial system is critical. The present system is exacerbating gender inequalities and threatening social inclusion.

Social protection programmes must include accountability and transparency mechanisms that are accessible women and girls. Such mechanisms must pay attention to gendered power differences which may discourage women from voicing their concerns or lodging complaints, and will ensure efficiently while avoiding corruption and further exclusion of this group. This will ensure strong and more involved state-society relationships develop, allowing women and girls to be involved and voice specific social issues that are forcing them to be pushed below the poverty margin and excluded from social protection and society.

We recommend the following strategies:

- States must empower girls and women through implementation of national floors of social protection in line with International Labour Organization R.202, that recognize their specific needs, including basic pensions and minimum unemployment benefits, with universal coverage for women in precarious and informal work.
- States must commit to allocating the necessary resources in national budgets to ensure women and girls have equal access to social protection systems.
- States must commit to implementing infrastructure that is sensitive to the specific needs of women and girls in its design.
- Reform the present financial architecture to reduce inequalities of women and girls and put the dignity and life of people before corporate benefits.
- Empowerment of girls and women through participation in the creation and legislation within political arenas.
- Ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation of social protection and the resources committed.

Leaving no one behind means the benefits of sustainable development must reach everyone. We foresee that these strategies would be efficient and effective in tackling the growing inequalities between men, women and girls. We must work

together at a global level strategically and intelligently to strive for universal justice so that social inclusion barriers are eliminated from society and equality is achieved for women and girls.